

VZCZCXRO0807
RR RUEHCN RUEHGH
DE RUEHGH #0134/01 0930540
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 020540Z APR 08
FM AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6801
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1813
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1186
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 1157
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 1184
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 1316
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 0996
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0201
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 7345

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SHANGHAI 000134

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM AND INR - CLARKE
NSC FOR WILDER AND TONG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [OEXC](#) [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [CH](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: SOCCER DIPLOMACY IN SHANGHAI

¶1. (U) Summary: In late March 2008, North Korea played South Korea in a World Cup Qualifier that ended in a draw. The mostly South Korean crowd gave each team a standing ovation at the end of the match. In Early March, the Los Angeles Galaxy played the Chinese All-Star team, although Chinese fans seemed more interested in David Beckham than the outcome of the game. The success of these two international matches offer a preview of this summer's Olympics, in which many of the Men's soccer qualifying matches will be played in Shanghai. End Summary.

Korea v. Korea

¶2. (U) North Korea hosted South Korea in Shanghai for a World Cup qualifying match on March 26, at Hongkou Stadium. In this early stage of World Cup competition, teams are put into a group with 3 other countries. Each country hosts the other three countries for a match. North Korea chose to host their match with South Korea in Shanghai instead of Pyongyang. This allowed North Korea to avoid the question of whether South Korea could fly its flag and play its national anthem. In Shanghai, both anthems were played and both flags flown while crowds cheered both teams.

¶3. (U) Although North Korea was nominally the host, South Koreans dominated the crowd. The 35,000 seat stadium was 70 percent full, with the vast majority of fans cheering for the South. The stadium pulsed with the cheers of "This is KoooooREA!" and fans singing lyrics set to Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." After the match, the two sides formed lines to exchange handshakes, then both teams took turns bowing to each side of the stadium. The crowd cheered wildly for both teams, giving them standing ovations. The few identifiable North Korean fans waved their flags with big smiles, celebrating their triumphant draw against the favored South. The South Korean fans also celebrated the chance to see a game that would have been all but impossible to attend had it been hosted in Pyongyang.

Beckham's Galaxy vs. China's All-Stars

¶4. (U) David Beckham was the star attraction when Major League Soccer's Los Angeles Galaxy took on an all-star team from Shanghai and Hong Kong on March 5. The crowd chanted Beckham's

name prior to the game and cheered each time he touched the ball. He did not disappoint, providing early on a crossing pass that set up the game's first goal.

15. (U) The game was hosted in the 80,000 seat Shanghai Stadium. The stadium, built in 1997, was about half capacity with most fans cheering for Beckham first and foremost. When Beckham was finally pulled from the game with 20 minutes remaining, nearly the entire crowd headed for the exits, despite the score being 1-0. The crowd's exit shows how much brand names matter in China. Following the game there were posters and jerseys of Beckham for sale. None of the vendors had Chinese team merchandise or merchandise for the game's star, Guatemala's Carlos Ruiz who scored all three of the game's goals. After Beckham, and most fans, exited, the Galaxy scored two more goals. The final scoreboard read USA: 3, China: 0, a bit of a misnomer for a game dominated by a Guatemalan and showcasing a British player.

COMMENT

16. (U) These matches demonstrated Shanghai's ability to successfully host international sporting events. Both venues were clean and easily accessible by public transportation. The crowds showed good sportsmanship, with the Korean game being particularly enthusiastic. A wide variety of nationalities attended both games and flags for North Korea, South Korea, the United States, and China were waved in support of their teams. Shanghai's administration of these two international matches bodes well for this summer's Olympics, in which many of the Men's soccer qualifying matches will be played in Shanghai. END

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COMMENT.
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